

**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

 Form Approved  
 OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) <b>26 October 2009</b>	2. REPORT TYPE <b>FINAL</b>	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Joint Task Force - Port Opening: Can this Emerging Capability Expedite Operational Objectives Throughout the Range of Military Operations?		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
		5b. GRANT NUMBER	
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  <b>Michael W. Pratt</b>		5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
Paper Advisor (if Any): Col Scott L. Efflandt		5e. TASK NUMBER	
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.			
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.			
14. ABSTRACT  With the U.S. Military shifting from a "defend in place" mindset to that of an "expeditionary" combat force, the need for a rapid port opening capability and efficient distribution network has never been greater. JTF-PO is an emerging capability under operational control of USTRANSCOM with the ability to provide a joint enabling force capable of rapidly deploying anywhere in the world to quickly establish, and initially operate, an aerial port of debarkation or sea port of debarkation, and establish a forward node in order to optimize port throughput while achieving 100 percent in-transit visibility. This paper starts by identifying the historical challenges that necessitated the creation of JTF-PO, explores its component parts and intrinsic capabilities, and evaluates its operational employment. Finally, this paper draws the conclusion that although a full JTF-PO has not been operationally employed, the successful employment of its component parts validate its capability, and that it is capable of expediting operational objectives throughout the range of military operations while at the same time filling the gaps for which it was designed.			
15. SUBJECT TERMS			
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:  a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept  19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556
			26

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

**JOINT TASK FORCE – PORT OPENING: CAN THIS EMERGING CAPABILITY**  
**EXPEDITE OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES THROUGHOUT THE RANGE**  
**OF MILITARY OPERATIONS**

by

Michael W. Pratt

Lt Col, USAF

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

26 October 2009

## Contents

Introduction	1
Background	2
Discussion / Analysis	6
Development of JTF-PO	6
JTF-PO APOD Elements and Capabilities	7
JTF-PO SPOD Elements and Capabilities	9
JTF-PO Operational Employment	11
Conclusions	17
Recommendations	19
Bibliography	21

## **Abstract**

### *Joint Task Force – Port Opening: Can this Emerging Capability Expedite Operational Objectives Throughout the Range of Military Operations?*

With the U.S. Military shifting from a “defend in place” mindset to that of an “expeditionary” combat force, the need for a rapid port opening capability and efficient distribution network has never been greater. JTF-PO is an emerging capability under operational control of USTRANSCOM with the ability to provide a joint enabling force capable of rapidly deploying anywhere in the world to quickly establish, and initially operate, an aerial port of debarkation or sea port of debarkation, and establish a forward node in order to optimize port throughput while achieving 100 percent in-transit visibility. This paper starts by identifying the historical challenges that necessitated the creation of JTF-PO, explores its component parts and intrinsic capabilities, and evaluates its operational employment. Finally, this paper draws the conclusion that although a full JTF-PO has not been operationally employed, the successful employment of its component parts validate its capability, and that it is capable of expediting operational objectives throughout the range of military operations while at the same time filling the gaps for which it was designed.

## INTRODUCTION

For nearly two decades the focus of America's defense strategy and combat operations has been shifting with an –expeditionary” mindset gradually replacing an emphasis on —~~defend~~ in place.” Moreover, since the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the expeditionary concept has become the basis of the national defense strategy for waging the global war on terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The expeditionary strategy is enabled through joint operational functions, like movement and maneuver, and sustainment, which require rapid force application<sup>2</sup> and the ability to extend operational reach<sup>3</sup> once a decision has been made to employ military forces. Rapid force application, in turn, demands the timely arrival of air, maritime, and land forces in the area of operations (AOR) so their *joint* effects result in early seizure of the initiative and build-up of momentum in order to achieve the desired objective.

The growing expeditionary nature of U.S. military forces, combined with their increasing joint nature and improved readiness posture, have also made them uniquely qualified to respond quickly to support U.S. participation humanitarian assistance (HA) and disaster relief (DR) operations. The military's role in HA and DR operations was evident with their support to the Pakistani earthquake relief effort in 2005 and their assistance with the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in that same year.<sup>4</sup> In fact, since 1990, approximately 75 percent of U.S. Transportation Command's (USTRANSCOM) logistics support to Combatant Commanders (CCDR) has been in response to contingencies which did

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility*, September 2005 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 September 2006), III-22 – III-23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., III-30 – III-31.

<sup>4</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

not involve any combat operations. The remaining 25 percent of support involved combat operations ranging from small scale contingencies to larger major combat operations.<sup>5</sup>

The ability to project joint forces over great distances is a basic strength of the U.S. military. In the past, however, the *speed* of force projection was not as critical to campaign success and the achievement of U.S. national security objectives as it has become today.<sup>6</sup> Rapidly developing crises require a rapid response by U.S. forces across the globe. Many of these crises will occur in areas with little or no U.S. force presence and with relatively undeveloped infrastructure—meaning primitive ports, roads, and airfields.<sup>7</sup> The ability to *effectively* project joint forces over great distances has become a significant challenge and one which has received some focused analysis in countless studies.<sup>8</sup> These studies followed their research to develop pointed areas for improvements whereby they were able to make substantive recommendations for change to national leaders.

This paper argues that USTRANSCOM’s emerging Joint Task Force – Port Opening capability can effectively achieve a rapid port opening, quickly facilitate the efficient arrival of initial forces, and maintain end-to-end visibility of all forces and equipment necessary to sustain initial operations and expedite CCDR objectives.

## **BACKGROUND**

The U.S. military has experienced countless challenges coordinating and tracking logistics supplies throughout its history. For example, in WWII senior U.S. leaders began to

---

<sup>5</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility, September 2005* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

have doubts about General Eisenhower's management acumen when his logistics process “misplaced” 260,000 tons of war-fighting materials—enough to prosecute the war for over two months. The War Department sent an admonishment to General Eisenhower stating “it appears that we have shipped all items at least twice and most items three times.”<sup>9</sup> In Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm more than 30 thousand containers were received in theater without any visibility as to their contents.<sup>10</sup> During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) it took more than seven months for visibility and accountability of intra-theater supplies to catch up with inter-theater shipments, with the first three months having an abysmal zero visibility on the contents of arriving cargo.<sup>11</sup> In Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) there was a \$1.2 billion discrepancy between what was shipped to the theater and what was receipted on the other end.<sup>12</sup> The situation in OIF forced commanders from remote forward operating bases to commit critically needed vehicles and combat forces from the front lines and travel hundreds of miles across Iraq and into Kuwait to locate and retrieve lost equipment.<sup>13</sup> It was clear these glaring gaps in efficiency and the inherent risks they created needed to be addressed and corrected.

In 2004, several U.S. Government and Department of Defense (DOD) agencies began to look at the lessons learned from previous and ongoing operations. Reviewing the lessons learned enabled researchers to distil these lessons with current capabilities in an attempt to develop the ability to rapidly deploy forces and efficiently sustain them.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2002), 50.

<sup>10</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

The most significant outcome of the review processes was the establishment of USTRANSCOM as the overall distribution process owner (DPO).<sup>15</sup> In 2006, the CDR USTRANSCOM was designated by the Secretary of Defense to transform the military's logistics and distribution process by, among other things, matching logistics requirements and priorities with modality capabilities, synchronizing logistics information systems, achieving end-to-end in-transit visibility (ITV), establishing and enhancing logistics infrastructure and capabilities, and aligning the entire distribution processes for maximum efficiency. These processes, once fully established, would have as their goal an improved, efficient, and sustainable theater distribution process.<sup>16</sup> Once identified as the DPO, USTRANSCOM now had the requirement, but more importantly the authority, to identify and grow the distribution system necessary to achieve these goals. The real challenge for USTRANSCOM was that the distribution process was not really a single system, but rather a "system of systems" with each working individually and in concert with the other to enable the projection and sustainment of forces necessary to achieve CCDR objectives.<sup>17</sup>

The Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility Report, just one of the several organizations tasked with reviewing lessons learned, argued that a particularly critical need for the U.S. military was the ability to move sufficient heavy and or medium land forces quickly into an area of conflict to gain and sustain the momentum of initial operations.<sup>18</sup> Much like combat operations, the military's support for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations, like the Pakistani earthquake and Hurricane Katrina, underscored

---

<sup>15</sup> Secretary of Defense, "Distribution Process Owner," DODI 5158.06 (Washington, DC: Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 30 July 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Craig Koontz, "U.S. Transportation Command," PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College, JMO Department.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility, September 2005* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 3.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility, September 2005* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 3.

the need to better integrate USTRANSCOM's deployment and distribution capabilities to support *all* types of theater operations throughout the range of military operations (ROMO). Similarly, after action reports and assessments from OEF and OIF highlighted challenges integrating initial port operations and the subsequent distribution process required to put critical war-fighting materials in the hands of the combat troops who required them. Furthermore, both OEF and OIF revealed additional shortcomings in the military's ability to respond to global crises with a coherent, expeditionary joint port opening and distribution capability.<sup>19</sup> Of particular concern was the current "ad hoc" and confusing nature of the deployable command and control (C2) structure, the limited connectivity to CCDR C2 centers, the minimal capability for airfield and distribution node assessments, a limited ability to rapidly clear a port of incoming cargo, a limited ability to provide in-transit visibility (ITV) of en-route cargo, and a minimal movement control capability over distribution operations.<sup>20</sup> USTRANSCOM now needed to develop this ability, or create it from scratch, with the resources now under its control as the military's DPO.

Critical to the success of such a capability was the need to shorten or eliminate the delays imposed by reception, staging, onward movement, and the integration of forces. Especially in combat operations, forces need to be able to disembark vessels or exit aircraft ready to fight in order to enable rapid and decisive operations.<sup>21</sup> Even before many of the reports reviewing these issues were published, USTRANSCOM's senior leadership had already initiated the development of a Joint Task Force Port Opening (JTF-PO) capability to

---

<sup>19</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, "Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101," PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 January 2009), 1.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility*, September 2005 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 17.

field jointly trained forces capable of providing CCDR support as quickly as possible in an effort to avoid reprising previously identified shortcomings.<sup>22</sup>

## DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

### DEVELOPMENT OF JTF-PO

In 2006, the CDR USTRANSCOM certified the first-ever JTF-PO capability in an effort to eliminate historical port opening inefficiencies.<sup>23</sup> JTF-PO is as a joint enabling force capable of rapidly deploying anywhere in the world to quickly establish and initially operate an Aerial Port of Debarkation (APOD) or Sea Port of Debarkation (SPOD), and establish a forward node out to ten kilometers in order to optimize port throughput. In accordance with their concept of operations (CONOPS), JTF-PO is a predetermined, scalable standby force of Air Force, Army, and Navy elements with all forces and equipment necessary to open and operate a port of debarkation anywhere in the world.<sup>24</sup> All three elements are operationally controlled (OPCON) and tasked by CDR USTRANSCOM with Air Force and Army elements ready-to-load within 12 hours of notification<sup>25</sup> and Navy elements ready-to-load within 36 hours of notification.<sup>26</sup> JTF-PO further facilitates joint reception, staging, onward movement and integration (JRSO&I) and theater distribution by providing an effective interface with the theater's Joint Deployment and Distribution Operations Center (JDDOC) and other key C2 organizations from the onset of operations.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 January 2009), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation*, 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Sea Port of Debarkation*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 August 2008), 10.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation*, 2-3.

With this capability, the CDR USTRANSCOM now has a predetermined, jointly trained, and fully resourced port opening force that can quickly deploy ahead of the primary force flow and unit supplies. Moreover, JTF-PO brings the air, land and maritime elements together under a single commander (USTRANSCOM) to effectively eliminate the ad hoc nature of port opening that has plagued previous operations. Establishing a force and capability under a single commander and eliminating the ad hoc nature of port opening is the first step toward eliminating previous shortcomings.

### **JTF-PO APOD ELEMENTS AND CAPABILITIES**

To fully appreciate how JTF-PO can meet port opening objectives it's important to understand its component parts and their respective capabilities. In order to meet the requirements of an air port of debarkation (APOD), the Air Force, in March 2005, morphed its well established and frequently tasked Tanker Airlift Control Elements (TALCE) into Contingency Response Groups (CRG) and aligned them under two newly formed wings called Contingency Response Wings (CRW). The CRGs, like the TALCEs before them, fell under Air Mobility Command (AMC) and provides the air element for JTF-PO.<sup>28</sup>

The CRG's capability was significantly bolstered from that of their TALCE predecessor to facilitate a complete air base opening (ABO) capability. With a footprint of just 116 airmen, a CRG is able to perform the ABO mission with a thorough airfield assessment capability, a robust Colonel-led C2 structure, comprehensive port operations with 100 percent ITV facilitated by a radio frequency identification (RFID) system, aircraft maintenance, security forces, and a comprehensive host of base operating support capabilities

---

<sup>28</sup> Col Brian O'Connor, “621st Contingency Response Wing Briefing,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

with the ability to open an austere air base.<sup>29</sup> Quite simply, the CRG was established to fill the long-standing gap that existed between airfield seizure forces (for combat operations) or from a host nation (for HA/DR), and pass a fully operational APOD on to an Air Expeditionary Task Force (AETF) 45-60 days after initial operations.<sup>30</sup>

The Army, in 2008, established the first of three Transportation Detachment – Rapid Port Opening (TD-RPO) capabilities which are designed to assume the surface element responsibilities for JTF-PO.<sup>31</sup> TD-RPO is provided by Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) and has the responsibility of supporting operations at both an APOD (with the Air Force) and SPOD (with the Navy), and one forward node out to 10 kilometers. Unlike its Air Force and Navy partners, TD-RPO is intended to be dual-tasked to perform both air and sea port requirements concurrently with two separate units.<sup>32</sup> With its 55 personnel and associated equipment, the Army's surface element brings with it the capability of comprehensive C2, complete distribution network assessment, comprehensive passenger and cargo transfer, and movement control of all cargo and personnel with 100 percent in-transit visibility (ITV).<sup>33</sup>

By joining the Air Force and Army elements together JTF-PO has the capability to simultaneously offload two fully-loaded C-17s and temporarily stage and/or trans-load up to 560 tons of cargo for surface delivery to a forward node with 100 percent ITV. This capacity can be sustained 24-hours a day, seven days per week and can be performed in daylight

---

<sup>29</sup> Col Brian O'Connor, “621st Contingency Response Wing Briefing,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>30</sup> Robert T. Dail and David Jones, “Deployment and Distribution Command and Control,” *Army Logistician* 39 (January-March 2007), 7, <http://proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 19 September 2009), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, “Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,” PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>32</sup> Robert T. Dail and David Jones, “Deployment and Distribution Command and Control,” *Army Logistician* 39 (January-March 2007), 7, <http://proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 19 September 2009), 5.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation, Concept of Operations*, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 January 2009), 6.

conditions, in permissive environments, or in a more covert environment with the use of night vision goggles (NVG).<sup>34</sup>

## **JTF-PO SPOD ELEMENTS AND CAPABILITIES**

The Navy's maritime capability for JTF-PO has comparable goals and similar capabilities as found in the air and surface elements. Because sea ports capable of supporting large or even medium sized container vessels are nearly always located at fixed ports and are able to provide sufficient contractor support, the Navy element's manpower requirements are not nearly as robust as its counterparts.<sup>35</sup> The Navy port opening element is not a predetermined force from an identified organization but rather an element sourced from Military Sealift command (MSC) and their Expeditionary Port Unit capability. The Navy is able to leverage a Naval Reserve-sourced augmenting capability which includes 10 sailors to perform ship husbandry and port liaison functions. This design also has the ability for a Navy Captain to assume command of all JTF-PO operations upon arrival.<sup>36</sup>

Just like its APOD counterpart, JTF-PO SPOD is able to provide 24-hour, seven days per week operations provided the appropriate fixed facilities are available. It is designed to handle at least one ship at one berth in a fixed port or multiple ships at several berths depending on to the supported scenario. It has an offload and throughput capability of one vessel measuring 250 thousand square feet every 72 hours.<sup>37</sup>

By combining the synergistic capabilities of JTF-PO's air, land and maritime elements, the CDR USTRANSCOM now has a jointly trained and task-focused force capable

---

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 January 2009), 6.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Sea Port of Debarkation*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 August 2008), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., A-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 12.

of opening an air or sea port of debarkation whenever required. Joint training requirements eliminate seams between elements and provided a mutual task focus thereby creating a unity of effort. By adding the technological advances of radio frequency identification (RFID) systems, deploying personnel and cargo can now be tracked from point of embarkation, to point of debarkation, to a forward node, and on to their intended destination with 100 percent in-transit visibility. These advances have virtually eliminated the lost cargo challenges of the past while providing commanders at every level visibility and in-transit information of equipment and personnel.

The final shortcoming that JTF-PO addresses is the ability to quickly assess a port for possible use in future or developing operations. Pre-deployment assessments eliminate surprises and are essential to the success of any port opening requirement or forward node operation. In order to ensure the best opportunity for success, both air and maritime JTF-POs have a thorough joint assessment team (JAT) capability made up from the jointly trained and qualified elements. The JAT is a separate entity from the JTF-PO main body with the sole mission of evaluating all aspects of opening the deployment and distribution networks of the port. The purpose of the assessment is to gather information to determine if the port and associated distribution infrastructure is capable of supporting the stated mission as well as to determine the availability of indigenous resources necessary to accomplish the defined tasks. The JAT commander will conduct their planning and assessment based on CDR USTRANSCOM's intent and the supported commander's identified mission requirements.<sup>38</sup> Understanding the supported commander's intended port operations, the associated distribution requirements, and the operational environment, provides the context for a

---

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force – Port Opening, Air Port of Debarkation*, Concept of Operations, (Scott AFB, IL: 1 January 2009), 11.

complete JAT assessment. With the JAT capability the CDR USTRANSCOM is now armed with the ability to efficiently support a CCDR's requirements as well as the knowledge to effectively place the right force at the right place at the right time.

## **JTF-PO OPERATIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

On paper, all the JTF-PO elements and capabilities are in place to achieve a successful and efficient port opening. However, because concepts and reality are not always congruent, it's important to analyze the actual employment of a capability to assess if it's capable of meeting its intended objectives. Although several elements of the JTF-PO capability have been tasked to support various real-world contingencies, the full JTF-PO capability has never been requested nor tasked outside the exercise environment.<sup>39</sup> Because several elements of JTF-PO have deployed operationally to support various HA and DR operations as well as small scale contingencies, their individual capabilities and accomplishments can be evaluated to determine if they are meeting their intended goals.

The most sought after capability of JTF-PO has been the JAT to evaluate the possibility of using new air bases for contingency operations or as a foundation for crisis response actions.<sup>40</sup> Since 2006, USTRANSCOM has tasked five JATs to assess the potential use of multiple APODs. Surprisingly, more than half of these taskings were for assessing U.S. commercial airports and the surrounding infrastructure in preparation for impending hurricanes. Learning from the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina, the CDR U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) asked CDR USTRANSCOM for assistance with Hurricane Dean in 2007 and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008. These hurricanes were

---

<sup>39</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, "Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101," PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

significant enough in their strength and potential for damage that the JATs were tasked to assess the ability of near-by airfields to permit mass evacuations, to include aeromedical evacuations of critically ill patients, and to assess the infrastructure for post-hurricane DR operations. In each of these cases comprehensive assessments were conducted at several airfields and the formal reports forwarded to USTRANSCOM and Air Mobility Command for use in planning the potential mass evacuations and military force requirements.<sup>41</sup>

The remainder of USTRANSCOM's JAT taskings were executed in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) to identify additional support base possibilities for OEF and OIF. Due to the looming potential of losing the use of Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, a pre-identified and jointly trained JAT team of Air Force and Army personnel was tasked to assess several bases in the AOR. The task of the JAT was to determine if any other bases had the infrastructure necessary to support all or part of the Manas operations and if additional build-up was required. Due to the sensitive nature of U.S. basing requirements and the political turmoil with regional support, the sites of the JAT's assessments were kept classified. Although the political challenges pertaining to the closure of Manas were resolved amicably and U.S. military operations allowed to remain at Manas, the JAT's assessment for joint operations at a half-dozen airfields proved to be invaluable to the future planning requirements of both USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM.<sup>42</sup> According to Brig Gen Tim Zadalis, the Air Force's Director of Mobility Forces for the USCENTCOM AOR at the time, the ease with which the JAT was tasked, deployed and employed under a single CCDR was seamless and met all the needs of the CDR USCENTCOM and Joint

---

<sup>41</sup> Col James Hamilton, Commander, 816th Contingency Response Group, to Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College, memorandum, 8 October 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) to make a timely and informed decision on a suitable replacement.<sup>43</sup>

The air element of JTF-PO has also been tasked extensively since they stood up as CRGs in 2005. Much like the JAT, they have been employed for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief more than any other purpose. In August 2005, CRG airmen led the Air Force response to Hurricane Katrina, sending dozens of personnel and heavy equipment to help reopen the devastated New Orleans International Airport.<sup>44</sup> Within 24-hours of being tasked, the CRG arrived and was able to establish C2 with the JFACC, Air Mobility Command, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and several non-government organizations. At the same time, they were able to quickly establish port operations to assist with the offloading and management of incoming relief supplies as well as the upload of thousands of evacuees. According to the Air Force Historical Research Agency, the CRG's quick response aided the massive airlift of 26,943 displaced persons and the air-evacuation of 2,602 medical patients from the disaster area, with more than 1,500 of the medical evacuations coming in a single 24 hour period. Additionally, they facilitated the arrivals of nearly 100 thousand military support personnel and 11,450 tons of equipment, supplies, and vehicles to aid in the relief operations.<sup>45</sup> Although the response to Katrina represented a political failure, the CRG's participation can be considered a success, especially given that Katrina represented the first-ever real-world employment of a CRG

---

<sup>43</sup> Brig Gen Tim Zadalis, Commander, 21st Expeditionary Mobility Task Force, to Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College, memorandum, 5 October 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Marc C. Schanz, "The First-in Mobility Crowd," *airforce-magazine.com*, (31 May 2006), "Search Archives," <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/> (accessed 19 September 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Daniel L. Haulman, "The US Air Force Response to Hurricane Katrina," Air Force Historical Research Agency, (17 November 2006), <http://www.afhra.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD070912-046.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2009).

while supporting the Pentagon's largest deployment of military forces for a civil-support mission in U.S. history.<sup>46</sup>

Within seven days of their return from Hurricane Katrina, many of the same CRG members would find themselves half a world away, aiding Pakistan relief efforts after the devastation of the October 2005 earthquake. Less than 48 hours after the earthquake had struck, and prior to the government of Pakistan granting them country clearance, the CRG was airborne with the required equipment and personnel to immediately establish an APOD with C2 and port operations. The CRG set up operations at Chaklala Air Base, just 20 miles outside of Islamabad and 100 miles south of the earthquake's epicenter, to manage the intense flow of U.S. military, civil, and international aircraft inbound to the airfield. The Pakistanis were simply overwhelmed by the colossal scale of relief required in the disaster area which prompted the Chaklala base commander to turn nearly all APOD operations over to the CRG commander soon after his arrival. The Pakistani commander stated –we [the Pakistanis] simply cannot handle this” and gave the CRG commander virtually complete authority to conduct operations and manage the airflow in whatever way he chose.<sup>47</sup>

During their 64 days in Pakistan, the CRG, with less than half their full complement of personnel, offloaded 273 U.S. military and commercial aircraft and loaded 587 trucks to carry relief supplies overland from the airfield to the earthquake's epicenter. Additionally, they helped unload aircraft from more than 20 other nations including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran. In all, the CRG offloaded more than 15 million pounds of relief supplies, assessed four international airports and one remote dirt-

---

<sup>46</sup> Daniel L. Haulman, “The US Air Force Response to Hurricane Katrina,” Air Force Historical Research Agency, (17 November 2006), <http://www.afhra.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD070912-046.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2009).

<sup>47</sup> J. W. Leland, *Pakistan Earthquake Relief: 818th Contingency Response Group Deploys to Support Operation LIFELINE*, 2005 AMC History (Scott AFB, IL: Historians Office, 2005), 8.

strip for potential APOD operations, performed 108 drop zone surveys, and called in the only three airdrops permitted by the government of Pakistan.<sup>48</sup>

In a Joint Forces Quarterly article from 2007, Admiral LeFever, the Joint Forces Commander for all relief operations in Pakistan, reported that the ability to respond quickly, adapt regionally, and coordinate and communicate between disparate agencies was vital. In assessing a full range of lessons learned, several major elements contributed to success; the military's capacity for speed and effectiveness, adaptive procedures including on-scene, empowered C2, and the ability to coordinate the response to a dynamic and evolving situation among vastly different military, civilian, and government entities in addition to international non-government organizations.<sup>49</sup> One month following U.S. operations in Pakistan, an A.C. Neilson poll showed the number of Pakistanis who had a "favorable opinion of the United States" had grown from 23 percent to 46 percent. By the spring of 2006, a State Department poll showed that number rose to 55 percent.<sup>50</sup> The CRG's commendable participation in the relief effort was part of the largest and longest relief effort in U.S. military history,<sup>51</sup> and proved that a rapidly deployable, jointly trained port opening capability can expedite operational objectives while improving the strategic landscape.

Although JTF-PO's elements are a proven capability, there is a down side. It is expensive to organize, train and equip a standing force with the primary purpose of opening a remote port upon request. The training and equipment costs alone are in the tens of millions

---

<sup>48</sup> J. W. Leland, *Pakistan Earthquake Relief: 818th Contingency Response Group Deploys to Support Operation LIFELINE*, 2005 AMC History (Scott AFB, IL: Historians Office, 2005), 21.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth J. Braithwaite, "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief—Keys to Success in Pakistan." *Joint Forces Quarterly*, January-March 2007, 20.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

of dollars.<sup>52</sup> However, Major General Kip Self, Commander of the Air Force Expeditionary Center and responsible for integrating the training for JTF-PO's air and land elements, analogizes the JTF-PO capability to that of a big city fire department. They both are an on-call force charged with quickly responding to emergencies with a specialized skill set. Absent the responsiveness or specialized capability, the net affects can add up to devastating losses.<sup>53</sup> The question for JTF-PO then becomes a question of risk.

Brigadier General A.J. Stewart, former commander of the 21st Expeditionary Mobility Task Force with responsibility for three CRGs, agrees with General Self. "It's a matter of risk—the JTF-PO capability mitigates the risks associated with port opening."<sup>54</sup> Using General Self's JTF-PO and fire department analogy and comparing it against the shortcomings of the past, it's clear that JTF-PO is an expensive capability but one that is necessary to mitigate the inefficiencies and expense (the risks) associated with past operations. The life-saving capability that was provided to Hurricane Katrina and the positive spike in approval following the relief efforts in Pakistan are not outcomes to which a dollar figure can be placed. Similar to the fire department, the JTF-PO capability will not always be engaged in port opening requirements. However, can anyone imagine the outcome of the 2001 terrorist attacks if the New York City fire department was a volunteer force, or if there were no fire department at all—probably not, because the risk is just far too great.

---

<sup>52</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, "Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101," PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

<sup>53</sup> Maj Gen Kip Self, Commander, U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center, to Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College, memorandum, 28 September 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Brig Gen A. J. Stewart, Commander, Air Force Recruiting Service, to Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College, memorandum, 11 October 2009.

## CONCLUSIONS

When reviewing the desired improvements and the need for increased capabilities identified in the various studies from which JTF-PO was created, it's clear that JTF-PO has achieved its goal. However, this conclusion is based solely on the operational employment of some of the JTF-PO's component parts combined with the results achieved by the remaining elements in the exercise environment. Because a full JTF-PO has never been operationally employed, the synergy of their capabilities cannot be fully analyzed and assessed. Given the overwhelming success of the JAT and CRGs while performing in real-world contingencies, it can be assumed that the entire package will work *“as advertised”* in USTRANSCOM's concept of operations.

The first area for port opening improvement identified by the studies was the ad-hoc nature of responding organizations and the distribution C2 limitations. JTF-PO has addressed this problem with jointly trained and jointly led air, surface and maritime elements with habitual relationships and supporting communications systems. The various elements train together, are certified by the CDR USTRANSCOM together, and deploy operationally together. Moreover, they have jointly-written their own tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) as well as joint standard operating procedures (JSOP) to ensure any seams that existed between the elements were addressed and eliminated.<sup>55</sup> JTF-PO C2 systems are now interoperable and have the ability to tie in almost immediately upon arrival at the port with USTRANSCOM, the supported commander and the appropriate Deployment and Distribution Operations Center (DDOC). The incorporation of an organic Air Force Colonel or Navy Captain as the overall JTF-PO commander has given significant horsepower and

---

<sup>55</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, *“Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101,”* PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

capability to the C2 integration. The limited port assessment challenges have been addressed and mitigated with the incorporation of the JAT. The joint nature of the JAT, and its ability to assess both the port and the forward node by organizations who will work them, is invaluable for the pairing and tailoring of forces required to put the right port opening force at the right place at the right time. The fact that the JAT is already being employed by USCENTCOM and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) is testimony to the confidence these CCDRs have in this capability and their need for its product. With combat operations in OEF beginning to ramp up and the unpredictability of Mother Nature, the capability of the JAT is sure to be in high demand in future operations.

The Army's limited ability to establish a forward node and network, a movement control capability, and their ability to coordinate cargo for onward movement has also been addressed and corrected. USTRANSCOM has tackled these challenges with a dedicated Army TD-RPO surface element that is able to work both air and sea port operations and is specifically designed to assess and open a forward node and network and integrate it seamlessly with the air and maritime elements. Additionally, they are able to effectively conduct full movement control operations and coordinate cargo for onward movement beyond the forward node.

The final shortcoming addressed by the various studies was that of end-to-end visibility. With the help of the organic ITV capability inherent in JTF-PO, commanders are able to realize 100 percent visibility of equipment and forces from their port of embarkation, through the port of debarkation, to the forward node, and finally onto the intended destination—the true intent of end-to-end visibility.

The only JTF-PO question left unaddressed is why the full capability hasn't been used in an operational environment. Given the capable nature of JTF-PO, it would seem logical that it would have been tasked at least once since its inception. There are two plausible answers to this question. First, given that the U.S. military already had existing distribution networks and established ports in Iraq and Afghanistan when JTF-PO was created, there was no need for its full capability. If USCENTCOM had been forced to relocate operations at Manas Air Base, the JTF-PO capability would surely have been employed to support standup of the new base. Secondly, and an important area for improvement, since JTF-PO is a new capability it isn't fully known or understood by the joint community. Because it is new, CCDRs and their staffs may be unsure of what to ask for when a need arises. Lending credibility to this argument is that USNORTNCOM and the newly formed U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) are the only two Combatant Commands who have written JTF-PO into their contingency plans despite the fact that all CCDRs have been briefed on this new capability.<sup>56</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because limited knowledge of JTF-PO is largely the reason for its lack of operational employment or incorporation into contingency plans, a more robust education and effort is required to ensure the lessons learned from previous military operations are not repeated. The JTF-PO elements and capabilities have proven themselves in the real-world environment and with impressive results. Their positive effects have been realized in both combat and humanitarian environments. Their employment expedited the port opening capability in the required AORs, saved lives, saved money, and brought a much needed efficiency,

---

<sup>56</sup> Maj Corey Simmons, "Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101," PowerPoint, 23 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College. Lt Col Michael W. Pratt.

predictability, and visibility to an immensely complicated function. Such a capability must be employed more in future operations in order to realize these vital effects and to evaluate where the process can be further improved.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atkinson, Rick, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2002.

Ackerson, Jeffrey. Contractor, U.S. Transportation Command J5/J4. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, 2 October 2009.

Braithwaite, Kenneth J. —U.S. Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief—Keys to Success in Pakistan.” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, January – March 2007, 19-22

Dail, Robert T., and David E. Jones. —Deployment and Distribution Command and Control.” *Army Logistician* 39 (January-February 2007): 2-8. <http://proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 19 September 2009).

Defense Science Board Task Force on Mobility. Report to the Secretary of Defense. Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics September 2005. [http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2005-09-Mobility\\_Final.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2005-09-Mobility_Final.pdf) (accessed 20 September 2009).

Diamond, Mark. —AMC Aircraft, People Continue Hurricane Relief Efforts.” *Air Force Surgeon General*, [http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/sg\\_newswire/hurricane\\_katrina/AMC.html](http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/sg_newswire/hurricane_katrina/AMC.html) (accessed 19 September 2009).

Hamilton, Col James. Commander, 816 Contingency Response Wing. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt. Memorandum, 8 October 2009.

Haulman, Daniel L. —The US Air Force Response to Hurricane Katrina”. *Air Force Historical Research Agency*. (17 November 2006). <http://www.afhra.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD070912-046.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2009)

Hull, Col Dian. Vice Commander, 21st Expeditionary Mobility Task Force. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Memorandum, 5 October 2009.

King, Kenneth. —Supplies When You Need Them.” *Defense Transportation Journal* 62 (August 2006): 9-10. <http://proquest.umi.com/> (accessed 19 September 2009).

Klausner, Lt Col Konrad. Deputy Commander, 621st Contingency Operations Support Group. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 30 September 2009.

Koontz, Craig. —U.S. Transportation Command.” PowerPoint. 23 September 2009.

Koontz, Craig. Contractor/Advisor to CDR U.S. Transportation Command. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, 28 September 2009.

Leland, J.W. *Pakistan Earthquake Relief: 818th Contingency Response Group Deploys to Support Operation LIFELINE*, 2005 AMC History. Scott AFB, IL: Historians Office, Air Mobility Command, 2005.

O'Connor, Brian. –621st Contingency Response Wing Briefing.” PowerPoint. June 2009.

O'Connor, Col Brian E. Commander, 621st Contingency Response Wing. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 27 September 2009.

Schanz, Marc V. –The First-in Mobility Crowd.” *airforce-magazine.com*, 31 May 2006. <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/Features/airpower/Pages/BOX053106CRG.aspx> (accessed 19 September 2009).

Secretary of Defense. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. –Distribution Process Owner.” DODI 5158.06. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 30 July 2007. <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/515806p.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2009)

Self, Maj Gen Kip. Commander, Air Force Expeditionary Center. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, 28 September 2009.

Simmons, Corey. –Joint Task Force – Port Opening 101.” PowerPoint. 23 September 2009.

Simmons, Maj Corey A. Chief, JTF – Port Opening Branch, U.S. Transportation Command. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 2 October 2009.

Sorensen, Col Steven. Commander, 818 Contingency Response Group. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 25 September 2009.

Stewart, Brig Gen A. J. Commander, Air Force Recruiting Agency. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 11 October 2009.

U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 September 2006.

U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Defense Logistics—Actions Needed to Improve the Availability of Critical Items during Current and Future Operations*. Report to Congressional Committees. Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, April 2005. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05275.pdf> (accessed on 20 September 2009).

U.S. Transportation Command. "Joint Task Force – Port Opening (Aerial Port of Debarkation)." Concept of Operations. Scott Air Force Base, IL: U.S. Transportation Command, Strategy, Policy, Programs and Logistics Directorate, 1 January 2009.

U.S. Transportation Command. "Joint Task Force – Port Opening (Seaport of Debarkation)." Concept of Operations. Scott Air Force Base, IL: U.S. Transportation Command, Strategy, Policy, Programs and Logistics Directorate, 1 August 2008.

Zadalis, Brig Gen Timothy. Commander, 21st Expeditionary Mobility Task Force. To Lt Col Michael W. Pratt, Naval War College. Memorandum, 5 October 2009.